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ABSTRACT

The focus of this issue is research findings on adult literacy assessment. "Multiple Assessments in Workplace Literacy" (Eunice N. Askov) describes assessments to meet the varied needs of the multiple clients that workplace literacy programs often serve. "Current Practice in Workplace Literacy Evaluation" (Judith A. Alamprese) reports results of an analysis of National Workplace Literacy Program project evaluations to assess the strengths and limitations of their evaluation designs. "Assessment of Adult Learners: Purpose and Context" (Jean H. Lowe) compares the American Council on Education's two high school equivalency programs: General Educational Development program and External Diploma Program. "Assessment Courseware for Workplace Literacy" (Brett Bixler, Eunice N. Askov) describes a computer-based, criterion-referenced assessment that helps adults obtain or progress in entry-level jobs by assessing related basic skills in a particular job area and diagnosing their strong and weak basic skills. "The APL Adult Performance Level and the NALS: The Second Coming of the Government/Educational Contractor Juggernaut in Adult Literacy Education" (Thomas G. Sticht) focuses on the meaning of the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) for adult educators. "Combining Published with Locally-Developed Measures to Assess Workplace Literacy Skills" (Dolores Perin) focuses on choosing between the two. "Portfolio Assessment in Adult Literacy Education" (Hanna Fingeret) considers its implementation and impacts and offers recommendations. Two resources are reviewed. (YLB)

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Research Notes on Literacy

Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy

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focus on assessment

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Multiple Assessments in Workplace Literacy*

Eunice N. Askov, Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy, Penn State

Workplace literacy programs often serve multiple clients: the adult learners, the union, the company's management, and the educational service provider. Because these clients have different interests in the program, they require different information. As a result, program providers must conduct multiple assessments to meet these varied needs.

These assessments range from informal, qualitative to formal, standardized, quantitative assessment. Because these measures cover an array of outcomes, they provide a holistic picture of the learners' skills, abilities, and interests.

Learner-centered Assessments

Because most participation in workplace programs is voluntary (even when on company time), instruction must meet individual needs along with the delivery of the workplace curriculum.

Adult learners have unique educational goals and needs. Prior life experience and training influence an individual's learning ability. Instructors should determine individual needs and prior knowledge during initial assessments to tailor instruction. Periodically, instructors and participants should reassess goals and benchmark progress towards learning goals.

Various informal assessments are useful to instructors in determining individual learning needs and progress. These include portfolios and participatory planning.

Union-centered Assessments

Unions are usually concerned about the general welfare and the empowerment of workers. Informal assessments such as attitudinal scales, followed by structured interviews, give program monitors an indication of change in workers' attitudes toward education. Workers can rate their perception of their progress in different occupational and basic skills areas through retrospective scales and self-rating scales.

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Current Practice in Workplace Literacy Evaluation

Judith A. Alamprese, COSMOS Corp.

As business and government invest more heavily in workplace basic skills programs, they show increasing interest in determining the usefulness of these programs.

The growing demand for program accountability has far reaching implications for adult literacy practice.

The main emphasis on accountability stems from the U.S. Department of Education through its National Workplace Literacy Program (NWLP), which since 1988 has funded demonstration projects to improve workplace literacy skills. A key aspect of the NWLP program is independent program evaluation. The main focus of the external evaluation is to assess the program's services and to examine the client and organizational outcomes.

Besides the NWLP external evaluations, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) have supported greater discussion and examination of issues related to evaluation of workplace programs. These issues have continued to provoke discussion and interest among the education and business partners.

As part of this effort to promote information about effective evaluation, I conducted a review of the evaluations of four NWLP grantees funded under the initial cycles of the program. These grantees were thought to be illustrative cases for examining the state of evaluation in workplace literacy programs. In this review, I analyzed NWLP project evaluations to assess the strengths and limitations of their evaluation designs. The experiences of these projects in carrying out long-term evaluations are valuable lessons for the field.

Data Collection

The more integrated data collection is to the practice of the program, the greater the likelihood of success. For example, in observing and rating participants' performance in the workplace, supervisors were involved in identifying types of skills that would be needed and in rating the participants' acquisition of these skills.

Measurement & Instrumentation

The use of standardized assessments for determining learner gains in English and basic skills were similar in all projects. This pattern reflects the state-of-practice in adult education assessment. However, when the programs developed their own measurements, new problems arose.

More information about the characteristics of these instruments (item analysis, reliability, and validity) would have been useful. These shortfalls may have been due to the limited time and budgets for the evaluations, or the reporting formats that were used by the evaluators.

The overall measurement of productivity in the workplace continues to be a difficult task. One project addressed this challenge the most directly by using multiple methods to collect information from the workplace about the types of outcomes that are reasonable to expect. While much reliance has been placed on task analysis as one data source for workplace outcomes, this process does not always generate comprehensive information. Rather, multiple sources (workers, supervisors, and upper-level management) should use a variety of sources to validate their findings.

Summary

As examples of descriptive evaluations, the projects were good attempts in defining evaluation questions, collecting relevant data to address these questions, and interpreting the results from observations and data analysis. The focus of all four programs was documenting project objectives and collecting both formative and summative data. Most of the reports included a lengthy description of a project's success in meeting its goals and objectives. Since a major emphasis in these projects was on formative evaluation, they highlighted a project's relative success with the activities originally proposed.

We can use the experiences of these projects to facilitate the evaluation activities of future workplace literacy programs. Evaluation efforts should take the next step and design strategies for analysis of the effectiveness of program components. Because of the importance of program related assessments (such as those measuring worker productivity), it is critical that field-based test developers use greater rigor to develop these assessments.

New efforts, such as the work carried out in the national evaluation of NWLP, will help to identify the most powerful and feasible evaluation designs that can be carried out in workplace literacy programs. Other efforts in dissemination and technical assistance also are needed so that new programs can move forward from the experiences of these four projects.

Assessment of Adult Learners: Purpose and Context

by Jean H. Lowe, GED Testing Service

The designers of any assessment process must grapple with several fundamental questions. As essentials, these include: What is the purpose of assessment? What specific knowledge and skills are to be addressed? How are outcomes to be measured? What are the standards by which performance levels are identified?

Answers to these questions alone, however, do not assure an assessment process that is equally appropriate for all candidates. Since individuals differ in a variety of ways, it is often helpful to provide them with alternative **means** of assessment, even when the purposes of assessment may be to certify achievement of the same goal. The remainder of this article illustrates this idea by comparing the American Council on Education's two high school equivalency programs: the General Education Development (GED) program and the External Diploma Program (EDP) according to the questions suggested above.

Since individuals differ in a variety of ways, it is often helpful to provide them with alternative means of assessment, even when the purposes of assessment may be to certify achievement of the same goal.

1. What are the knowledge and skills to be addressed?

Both the GED testing program and the External Diploma Program measure the outcomes that society expects of high school graduates. The GED Tests require adults to demonstrate within an **academic context** their knowledge and skills in the core area of a high school curriculum: Writing Skills, Social Studies, Science, Interpreting Literature and the Arts, and Mathematics. Test items are generated and critiqued by secondary education teachers and curriculum specialists as well as test and measurement experts. The EDP program, through an expert consensus process, has identified 65 competencies in a **life-skills context** in which they are required to demonstrate these competencies through such complex tasks as preparing for a job, making a consumer purchase decision, and deciding among health care alternatives. Both programs share the essential expectations that successful graduates be able to read, write, think, and compute at the high school graduate level.

2. How are outcomes measured?

The GED Tests are standardized tests, primarily multiple choice, which also include an essay. The entire battery is administered under standard conditions, usually to groups of examinees who must complete the battery within seven hours and thirty-five minutes (often spread out over a period of days). EDP's approach to assessment is entirely different. Competencies, which have been fully explained to candidates in advance, are assessed in structured interviews and applied performance demonstrations. Candidates, who may take an average of about six months to complete their preparation, are evaluated by trained raters according to standardized criteria generated and monitored by the American Council on Education.

3. What are the standards by which performance levels are identified?

The GED Tests are norm referenced—that is, tied to the performance of a reference group. The GED Testing Service establishes scores by administering the tests to large nationally representative samples of high school seniors. Passing scores are then set so that only about 70 percent of graduating high school seniors would obtain passing scores.

EDP is a criterion-referenced assessment process that is tied to a specific standard of performance. Criteria for success are defined in advance and outlined in standardized manuals. Local school boards review the competencies before implementing the program and must agree to grant a local diploma. EDP's standard for demonstration is clear; all competencies must be demonstrated with 100 percent accuracy. Candidates have an opportunity to redemonstrate any competencies that were not accurately demonstrated, but they may not graduate until they have demonstrated every competency successfully.

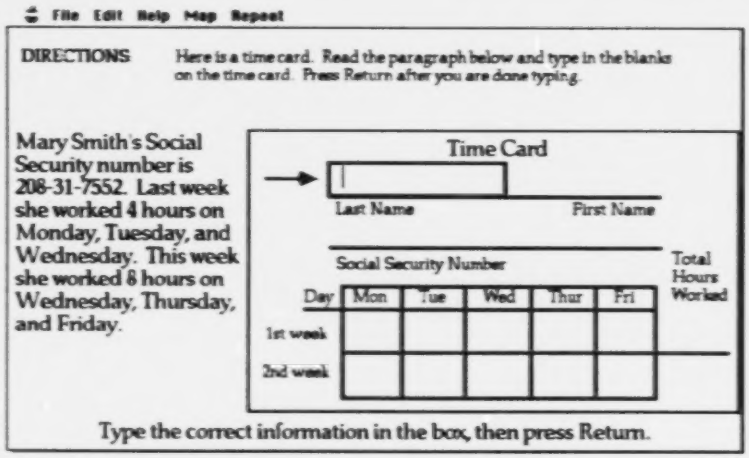
Conclusion.

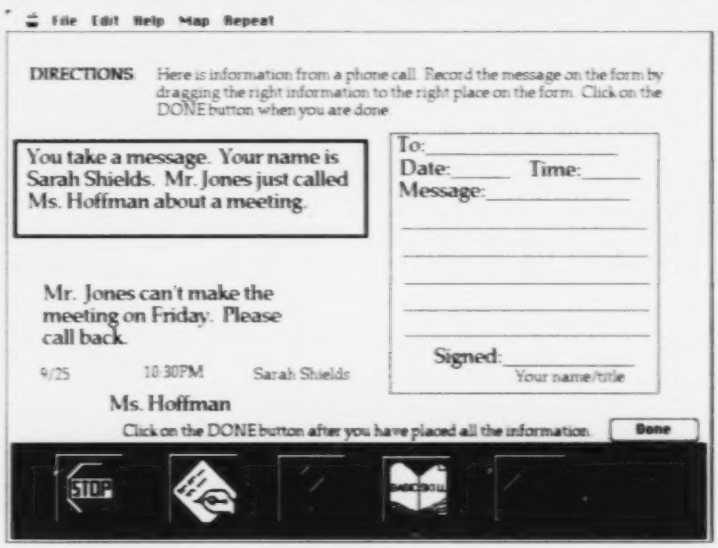
Effective measurement processes must accommodate the needs of candidates as well as the purposes of assessors. If adult learners are asked to provide meaningful information about their knowledge and skills, they must be offered appropriate contexts to demonstrate what they know.

Assessment Courseware for Workplace Literacy

by Brett Bixler & Eunice N. Askov, Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy, Penn State University

Many adults training for entry-level jobs may not have realistic expectations of the basic skills required to perform those jobs or know whether their own basic skills are adequate for the jobs they want. Criterion-referenced assessment provides diagnostic information about individuals and data for program accountability. *A Day in the Life. . .Assessment*, a computer-based, criterion-referenced assessment, helps adults obtain or progress in entry-level jobs by assessing related basic skills in a particular job area and diagnosing their strong and weak basic skills. This diagnosis enables the instructor to provide instruction in those weak areas. Instructors can also use the software in program evaluation as pre- and post-tests. In addition, they can use it as an indicator of progress in its instructional counterpart, *A Day in the Life. . . Instruction*, which offers instruction in basic skills in the same five job areas.


File Edit Help Map Repeat
DIRECTIONS Here is a time card. Read the paragraph below and type in the blanks on the time card. Press Return after you are done typing.
Mary Smith's Social Security number is 208-31-7552. Last week she worked 4 hours on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. This week she worked 8 hours on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.
Time Card
Last Name
First Name
Social Security Number
Total Hours Worked
Day
Mon
Tue
Wed
Thur
Fri
1st week
2nd week
Type the correct information in the box, then press Return.


File Edit Help Map Repeat
DIRECTIONS Here is information from a phone call. Record the message on the form by dragging the right information to the right place on the form. Click on the DONE button when you are done.
You take a message. Your name is Sarah Shields. Mr. Jones just called Ms. Hoffman about a meeting.
Mr. Jones can't make the meeting on Friday. Please call back.
9/25 10:30PM Sarah Shields
Ms. Hoffman
To:
Date: Time:
Message:
Signed:
Your name/title
Click on the DONE button after you have placed all the information.
Done
STOP

A Day in the Life . . . Assessment is designed for adults reading from about third to eighth-grade levels. The program, which requires little computer sophistication, enables adult learners to run through the program on their own after a few minutes of instruction on the use of the computer. The courseware is job-specific; it allows adults to assess their basic skills in the context of the job cluster they wish to enter. The courseware addresses an array of job-related basic skills, targeted at under-prepared adults who have entry-level jobs or who aspire to entry-level jobs. The five occupational clusters the courseware addresses are: food service, health care, maintenance, retail trade, and clerical support.

Through computerized examples of problems that workers meet on the job, learners can explore the job cluster they wish to enter and assess their basic skills in the context of that field. The program gives immediate responses for incorrect answers, increasing learning during assessment. The screen displays relevant graphics. *A Day in the Life . . . Assessment* measures the following basic skill areas:

•Reading

The program assesses the learner's interpretation of forms, notes, and memos in the context of a job task. For example, a learner must read a memo and answer specific questions about it to complete a task.

•Writing

It stresses writing through the completion of job forms, notes, and memos (See Figures, pg. 4). Free-response questions also give the learner an opportunity to write.

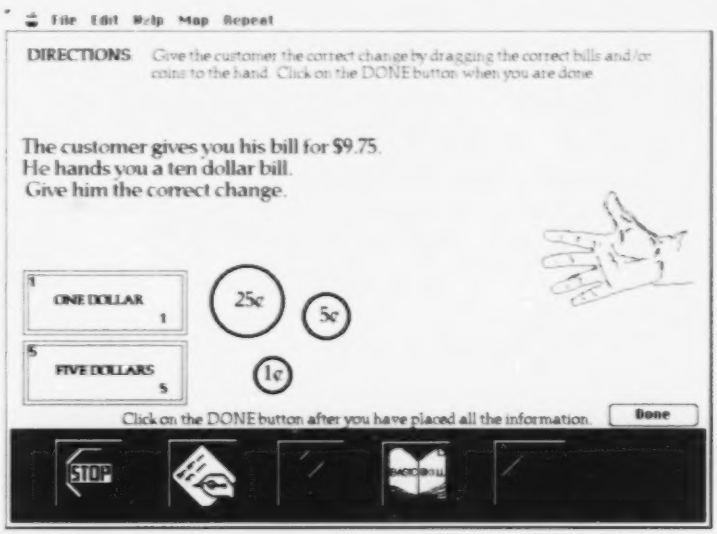
•Math

It simulates math tasks common to the workplace. For example, the learner must calculate the change needed for a bill (See Figure, pg. 5).

•Problem Solving

The learner must apply problem-solving strategies to accomplish a task. In one task, for instance, the learner must read an inventory list and decide which items to order to restock a supply room.

Two modes of assessment are possible: 1. *Learning* where the program allows users to change their answers based on learning during the assessment, and 2. *Test* where assessment information is used for program evaluation or measurement of learning. Used in the *Learning* mode, where users can change their answers based on learning from the items, assessments can also instruct learners. The instructor can select either the *Learning* or *Test* mode for individual adult students. Because the instructor is able to elect in which mode the assessment will be used, it can be a powerful and flexible tool in adult and workplace/workforce literacy programs. The computer records student responses to criterion-referenced assessment items in easily accessible reports, as described below.


File Edit Help Map Repeat
DIRECTIONS Give the customer the correct change by dragging the correct bills and/or coins to the hand. Click on the DONE button when you are done.
The customer gives you his bill for $9.75.
He hands you a ten dollar bill.
Give him the correct change.
ONE DOLLAR
FIVE DOLLARS
25¢
5¢
1¢
Click on the DONE button after you have placed all the information.
Done
STOP

The *Complete Module Basic Skills Report* contains a brief description of each basic skill assessed, the total number of times a user accessed those skills, the total number of times the student answered correctly, and the percentages correct.

The *Typed Responses Report* shows free response questions from the assessment, the answers to those questions that the student typed, and notebook entries (see below). Instructors can holistically analyze the student's free responses and use them as the basis for instruction in writing.

The *Individual Screen Report* shows scores for the first response made to an assessment item, including: the screen number where the basic skill was assessed, a basic skill code identification number, and the first response result (1 = correct, 0 = incorrect). The instructor can use this detailed report for statistical analysis of student data.

In addition to these reports, the student's notebook and a courseware map are available for examination. The student's notebook contains entries the student made in a simple word processor. The notebook is available throughout the assessment for the students to type notes. The courseware map lists which units of assessment the student went through.

A Day in the Life. . . Assessment was developed and pilot tested by the Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy at Penn State University. Currently, 14 field test sites are using the courseware and providing the Institute with reports and suggestions from both teachers and learners using the software. Developers validated the courseware by correlation with the *Tests of Adult Basic Education* (TABE) during field testing primarily in Illinois and Pennsylvania. Reliability was established through determining internal consistency.

A Day in the Life . . . courseware is available through CURRICULUM ASSOCIATES®, INC. in North Billerica, Massachusetts at (800) 225-0248. CURRICULUM ASSOCIATES was founded in 1969 for the purpose of developing and marketing instructional materials. The company is now actively involved with adult literacy and workplace literacy instruction.

The APL and the NALS: The Second Coming of the Government/ Educational Contractor Juggernaut in Adult Literacy Education

by Thomas G. Sticht, Applied Behavioral & Cognitive Sciences, Inc.

The Clinton administration, National Governor's Association, and state and local governments are calling for new standards at all levels of education. For us educators of out-of-school youth and adults, this means we will be held accountable for meeting the new standards.

But right now, while the push is on for "world class" standards at all levels and locations for education, there isn't much agreement on just what the standards should be—anywhere.

Historically, surveys of adult literacy have not yielded useful information for policy formulation or practice. Whether we call them indicators of "intelligence," "aptitude," or "literacy," the numbers we assign to people and the categories or levels we sort them into are based on one-shot, paper-and-pencil tests that are highly fallible as indicators of people's full competence.

Almost a quarter of a century after the Adult Performance Level (APL) Survey, the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) has become a key assessment instrument of adult literacy. The focus of the NALS is on "real world" tasks called *prose literacy*, *document literacy*, and *quantitative literacy*. Like the APL, the NALS has spun off a commercial assessment and curriculum materials.

The NALS reported that about 21 to 23% of adults are in level 1 and 25 to 28% of adults are in level 2, depending on which of the three literacy scales was used. The NALS referred to the 46 to 51% of adults in level 1 and 2 as having limited literacy skills. These figures are very similar to those reported by the Adult Performance Level (APL) survey in the 1970s.

Despite cautionary notes in the NALS report, the impression was given everywhere that if a person was assigned to a given level, he could not perform any tasks above that level. But that is a false impression. For instance, a person with a 200 skill score and assigned to level 1 could be expected to perform 45% of level 2 tasks, 25% of level 3, and 20% at level 4, and 15% (one in six) tasks at level 5, the most demanding level. Yet, in reporting the numbers and percentages of people at each level, there was an implied denial of their competence at the higher levels, because they could not do 80% of the tasks at each of the higher levels. But in the people's minds, they did not sort their competence into level categories. So when asked how well they could read, it is not surprising that people who could in fact perform many difficult tasks said they could read pretty well.

Perhaps it is time to rethink the aims, nature, and place of adult basic education in the nation's education system.

With tens of millions of taxpayer's dollars already invested in the NALS, the federal government is now spending more on contracts to promote the NALS and to determine its implications for policy and practice. The NALS activity is even more pervasive than the APL was because the Department of Labor has contracted for a version of the NALS to evaluate the literacy skills of people in Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs and those using employment benefits. Ten states have contracted for NALS-type surveys, and with its concern for international competitiveness, the federal government is working with various international agencies and national governments on using the NALS for assessing the skills of adults in other nations to see how U.S. adults stack up to its competitors.

With the obvious clout of the NALS, it is important to ask: What does this all mean for us adult educators? Will there be massive infusions of money for adult education? That has not been the gist of government reaction to the NALS. Will programs be held accountable now for moving adult basic education students from NALS levels 1 and 2 to level 3 and above? On each of the three NALS scales? And will that mean teaching PDQ (prose, document, & quantitative literacy)? What ever happened to all those other "life skills" of the APL study or the academic skills and knowledge for the GED?

Given the new focus on international competitiveness, adult educators around the globe will no doubt be asked to do more with less. But

there is every reason to believe that they cannot do it. In part because no one knows just what the NALS tasks measure, and hence, it is not clear just what should be taught.

Further, standardization of programs both in curriculum and testing that efforts like the NALS spawn seems contrary to the growing movement among adult educators toward participatory, learner-centered education, with diversity of curriculum and alternative assessments of learner progress and program effectiveness. There seems to be a direct conflict between national policies and local practices.

Perhaps it is time to rethink the aims, nature, and place of adult basic education in the nation's education system. Will adult basic education continue to be considered essentially as a "remedial" program that would go away if the schools did their jobs? Will this cultural belief change so that "second chance" programs that are funded at "second rate" levels will disappear and be replaced by world-class education programs capable of achieving world class standards?

Historically, surveys of adult literacy have not yielded useful information for policy formulation or practice.

Let's hope so. Let's hope the government/educational contract juggernaut put in motion by the NALS is stopped before it crushes the search for innovations in adult education. As Yogi Berra might say about the NALS and its predecessor, the APL, let's hope that something constructive can come of all this. Let's hope it's not *déjà vu* all over again.❧

Reference

Kirsch, I., Jungeblut, A., Jenkins, L., & Kolstad, A. (1993). *Adult Literacy in America.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Copies of the publication are available by writing to Education Information Branch, OERI, U.S. Department of Education, 555 New Jersey Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20208-5641 or call (800) 424-1616.

Multiple Assessments

(Continued from pg. 1)

Management-centered Assessments

Typically, management is concerned about how mastery of job-related basic skills results in improved job performance. Integration of criterion-referenced and curriculum-based assessments is becoming more popular because it is a better indicator of improvement in performance than traditional, grade-level indicators.

The National Workplace Literacy Grants program now encourages implementing curriculum-based and criterion-referenced assessments. However, instructors should be aware of issues concerning reliability and validity of these assessments. Potentially, legal problems could occur if incorrect test development procedures yield results that could jeopardize a worker's job security or access to educational or training programs.

One possible solution is to use standardized criterion-referenced tests such as CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System, 1989), which ties workplace competencies to reliable and valid tests.

Another alternative is the use of computerized, criterion-referenced assessments like *A Day in the Life. . . Assessment* (see pgs. 4-5). This is a valid and reliable assessment that measures a learner's basic skills competencies in a wide array of job tasks.

Provider-centered Assessments

Although most programs use standardized tests such as the *TABE* (Tests of Adult Basic Education) for assessment and accountability, informal assessments such as cloze tests or portfolios are becoming more widely used. Both kinds of assessments have value. While standardized tests permit comparisons among workplace programs, qualitative assessments provide a basis for planning instruction and customization to specific workplace scenarios.

Summary

Assessment in workplace literacy programs must be ongoing. By viewing assessment from different perspectives, program providers can draw a holistic picture of the learner's progress and program accountability. Only through accurate information and a balanced perspective can the two goals of participant growth and program value be demonstrated.❧

*This article is condensed:
Askov, E. N. (1993). Approaches to assessment in workplace literacy programs: Meeting the needs of all the clients, *Journal of Reading, 36*(7), 550-554.

Combining Published with Locally-Developed Measures to Assess Workplace Literacy Skills

by Dolores Perin, Center for Advanced Study in Education,
City University of New York, Graduate School

Two major purposes of adult literacy assessment are to plan instruction and to evaluate program effectiveness. Few measures can simultaneously satisfy both needs. While "authentic" assessments (e.g., writing portfolios, error analysis, diagnostic interviews) seem most promising for planning instruction, they don't permit pre-post comparison.

In this discussion, we consider the evaluation function of assessment where the choice is usually between published and locally developed, curriculum-based tests. Each assessment has advantages and disadvantages and neither one alone is satisfactory. Therefore, choosing between them is not easy.

Choosing between these two types of assessments is an important issue in workplace literacy. Locally developed, curriculum-based measures have become popular for two reasons: 1. workplace literacy practitioners usually customize instruction; and 2. the various "stakeholders" (business, labor, participants, teachers, funders) want information about specific rather than general literacy skills.

Literacy practitioners often contrast locally developed measures with "standardized" tests. However, what they may overlook is that locally developed measures are often standardized. Testing procedures, materials, questions, and time limits remain constant across administrations. What is wrong with many published measures is not standardization but that the content and skills that they measure are irrelevant to literacy performance in or out of the class. In contrast, practitioners feel that locally developed measures are highly relevant.

Each assessment has advantages and disadvantages, and neither one alone is satisfactory.

Despite their relevance to instruction and practice, locally developed tests are often limited because they are not norm-referenced or criterion-referenced in any theoretically based, systematic way. This prevents comparisons across programs. Further, the validity and the reliability of locally developed tests are usually unknown.

Reliability and validity are essential features of any assessment instrument. A reliable assessment will, in principle, yield the same scores each time it is administered. Test developers can make a test more reliable by improving instructions for administration and scoring. One of the features of validity is evidence (e.g., opinions of a panel of expert judges or correlations with other tests that are similar in some way) that the test measures the skills intended. Test developers can make an assessment more valid. For example, a panel of content experts can review test items and rewrite or reject those that they consider to be irrelevant. Without knowing the levels of reliability and validity, it is difficult to interpret a test score with any confidence. Most published tests are reliable although they often lack features of validity. For example, the items of published tests are often irrelevant to classroom learning or real-life practices which greatly undermines their validity.

A workplace literacy project (funded under U.S. Department of Education National Workplace Literacy Program, Grant Award #V198A20004) for therapy aides in New York City psychiatric hospitals used a combination of published and locally developed measures to examine pre-post literacy improvement. The assessments measured reading, writing, self-concept, and self-efficacy. The project used two published and three locally developed measures. (Data analysis is currently underway; I will make results available in summer, 1994.)

The published tests were the Prose Section of the Test of Applied Literacy Skills (ETS, 1991) and the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (Roid & Fitts, 1991). The three assessments produced by the project were closely related to the workplace literacy curriculum. These tests measured reading, writing, and self-efficacy. The reading

(Continued on pg. 10)

Portfolio Assessment in Adult Literacy Education

by Hanna Fingeret, Literacy South, Durham, NC

A growing group of dedicated and creative adult literacy educators are breaking new ground in alternative assessment and the use of portfolios.

I interviewed more than 50 practitioners and a few students who were using portfolio assessment (Fingeret, 1993). The participants came from a wide range of institutions, such as libraries, community-based organizations, community colleges, volunteer organizations, and workplaces. The programs covered a spectrum, including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), and High School Equivalency Preparation (GED). I also conducted an extensive literature review that yielded references largely from public school education. Although it is clear that public school researchers' and teachers' experiences have much to offer us, different circumstances in adult literacy and different characteristics of our learners also raise unique issues.

Implementing Portfolio Assessment

Portfolios are collections of artifacts that reflect students' literacy abilities and ways they use literacy in their lives. Instructors involve students in setting criteria for choosing the contents and assessing progress, selecting pieces for the portfolio, and reflecting on their learning process. Portfolio assessment is appropriate for teachers using a learner-centered whole language approach to instruction.

Four major periods of reflection and decision-making (outlined below) emerged from my examination of interviews and literature.

1. ***Decide if portfolio assessment is consistent with your approach to instruction and assessment.***
   a. Clarify your beliefs about literacy and their relationship to how you work with students.
   b. Clarify the purposes of assessment and the relationship between assessment and instruction.
   c. Decide whether portfolio assessment is consistent with your beliefs about literacy and assessment.

2. ***Plan portfolio assessment.***
   a. Decide areas in which you will implement portfolio assessment and types of materials you and the learners will collect.
   b. Schedule portfolio development.
   c. Select criteria for choosing material to move from folders to portfolios.
   d. Design a process for moving material from folders to the portfolio.
   e. Develop criteria and a process for assessing portfolios.

3. ***Implement portfolio assessment.***
   a Introduce the idea to your students at the beginning of instruction, if possible.
   b. Create folders and journals (mechanisms to document the process and the products of learning).
   c. Develop criteria for moving materials from folders to portfolios.
   d. Move material from folders to portfolios.
   e. Assess the portfolios.

4. ***Evaluate the process and revise it for future use.***

(Continued on pg. 10)

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Published & Locally-Developed Measures

(Continued from pg. 8)

test simulated a medical report that the workers had to read on the job. Participants wrote answers to comprehension questions. The writing test was based on the job task of writing patient reports. The participant described the most difficult or most interesting patient he or she had worked with, focusing on observed behavior, family history, and how the patient interacted with the participant and others. A four-point holistic scale was developed for each of five attributes of writing: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. In the self-efficacy scale, the therapy aides rated their confidence in their ability to perform tasks such as rephrasing what patients say and writing a summary in preparation for making a case presentation.

We expect that the combination of published and locally developed assessments will provide a more comprehensive picture of the therapy aides' literacy than either type of measure alone could. Until sufficient funds are available for establishing reliability and validity of local measures, workplace literacy programs should use them in conjunction with published measures to compensate for the deficiencies and capitalize on the advantages of each approach.❧

References

Educational Testing Service. (1991). *ETS Tests of Applied Literacy Skills: Administration and Scoring Manual.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

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Portfolio Assessments

(Continued from pg. 9)

Impacts of Involvement in Portfolio Assessment

Portfolio assessment is practical and useful according to the practitioners and students who participated in this project. It redefines the scope of assessment, and provides a way to look at personal development and academic skill growth as reflected in new literacy practices. Teachers consistently talk about how much they learn about their students and how useful it is. Portfolio assessment also promotes professional development and practitioner inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Some teachers feel it contributes to teacher and student satisfaction and decreases attrition.

Portfolio assessment facilitates deeper reflection for students and a deeper communication between students and teachers. Students develop new insights into their learning, new skills, and new attitudes about learning. Portfolio assessment helps students develop a new sense of control over their learning and helps them to believe in their ability to assess their learning. Students often feel stronger, more confident, and more deeply engaged in learning.

Recommendations

We should:

- Develop national and local mechanisms for those who are using portfolio assessment in adult literacy education to support professional development, resource sharing, and building a body of knowledge about portfolio assessment.
- Train trainers in portfolio assessment.
- Incorporate portfolio assessment into each state's indicators of program quality.
- Encourage innovation by improving professional support and working conditions and building program capacity in adult literacy education.

Implementing portfolio assessment has tensions; it is not a panacea for instruction and assessment issues. It requires time, resources, and a shared commitment to take on difficult questions. It has to be reinvented in every setting, and it has to be implemented as a process, over time. We have only begun to scratch the surface of many of the most complex issues. Most importantly, portfolio assessment, like other forms of alternative assessment, requires that we have the courage to examine the beliefs, values, and assumptions implicit in our work. It requires forging new relationships between teachers and students that will present some difficult moments for all of us. Many of the practitioners who shared their work with me during this project inspired me with their courage. I look forward to more literacy educators joining their ranks in the years ahead.❧

References

Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L., (1993). *Inside/Outside: Teacher research and knowledge*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Fingeret, H. (1993). *It belongs to me: A guide to portfolio assessment in adult education programs.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Copies of the guide are available free by sending a mailing label to the Clearinghouse on Adult Education, Division of Adult Education, and Literacy, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC 20202-7240.

Review

McGrail, L., & Schwartz, R. (Eds.) (1993, October). *Volume 5: The Tale of the Tools. Adventures in Assessment.* Boston, MA: SABES Central Resource Center.

The System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES) Central Resource Center in Massachusetts publishes journals (among other publications) on topics of interest to adult literacy professionals. *Adventures in Assessment* is one example.

This particular issue includes articles recounting experiences of a group of teachers exploring alternative assessment as a component of the Greater Opportunities in Adult Learners Success (G.O.A.L.S.) project. Many participating teachers worked in programs that had incorporated learner-centered curricula.

Learner-centered curricula demand assessments based on learners' goals as well as on the goals of the programs. Each program, therefore, developed assessment and evaluation tools that considered teachers' and learners' characteristics, learners' goals and interests, and learners' uses of literacy in their daily lives.

Each article in the issue includes sample assessments. The writing is very personal, clearly describing the difficulties and successes each teacher experienced in exploring issues of accountability, assessment, and evaluation. It becomes obvious that alternative assessment is, generally, a messy process; no single "right way" to conduct assessment exists. It demands that teachers carefully consider and explore various approaches and reflect on the purposes of adult literacy education and the needs of the learners. This process, however, can result in program evaluation and learner assessment that is valuable and informative, reflecting the real needs and interests of adult learners.

Adventures in Assessment is available free to Massachusetts programs; out-of-state programs pay a nominal fee. To order, contact SABES Central Resource Center, World Education, 210 Lincoln Street, Boston, MA 02111, telephone: 617-482-9485.

Reviewed by Barbara VanHorn

Mosaic: Research Notes on Literacy, published three times a year by the Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy in Penn State's College of Education, announces research results and publications in adult literacy. *Mosaic* is distributed free of charge to the research and practitioner communities.

Submissions of 1,000 words or less regarding research in progress or recently completed and news items of 500 words or less related to research or practice are always welcomed. Address editorial correspondence to:

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Wiggins, G. (1989). Assessment: Authenticity, Context, and Validity. *Phi Delta Kappan, 75*(3), 200-213.

This article is taken from Wiggins' book, *Assessing Student Performance: Exploring the Purpose and Limits of Testing*, published by Jossey-Bass, October 1993. The author has written extensively on alternate forms of assessment in an effort to provide a more suitable and accurate understanding of student progress in the school setting. It is Wiggins' viewpoint that there are multiple difficulties with school-based testing as it has traditionally been done. Wiggins explores the issues of authenticity, context, and validity in testing by looking at these as they apply to and interact with the concepts of performance, understanding, and situational constraints.

The author looks at different testing formats, examines criteria for scoring essay writing, as well as discussing guidelines for foreign language proficiency. Wiggins offers a thoughtful and developed analysis of factors needed to construct an authentic and valid test. He looks at the issue of performance and the necessity for a test to replicate authentic challenges and conditions. In looking at performance, he introduces the idea that performance requires an adaptiveness and flexibility which are a window to the learner's habits of mind, not her learnedness.

Wiggins lists nine factors regarding authenticity in testing. He considers face validity of tests for its effect on user attitudes and how that reaction can facilitate full use of the student's repertoire of skills. Wiggins suggests that student response to the test be considered as an indication of its validity. Wiggins brings fresh perspective and novel insight to assessment. A persistent theme is that intellectual performance must be personalized and idiosyncratic. A standardized educational experience is not what lifelong education is all about.

Reviewed by Josie Henning & Shawn Jenkins

Upcoming Events

❖May 1-3, 1994. National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL): Third Annual National Conference on Family Literacy. *Family Literacy: The Foundation for Strengthening a Nation.* Louisville, KY, NCFL, (502) 584-1133.

❖May 4-6, 1994. Texas Workforce Education Consortium: *Designing Workforce Education for a High Performance Economy.* Dallas, TX. Kay Taggart, (915) 542-2745.

❖May 9, 1994. KET video-conference:*New Demographics: Our Changing Society.* Valinda Wagner or Sarah Greene, (800) 354-9067.

❖May 25-27, 1994. *Newspaper Association of America Foundation's Conference on Newspaper in Education and Literacy.* Memphis, TN. Meg Sheretz, (703) 648-1049.

❖June 2-5, 1994. International Distance Education: *A Vision for Higher Education.* University Park, PA. Debbie Noyes, (814) 863-1744.

❖June 2-5, 1994. Laubach Literacy Action Biennial Conference: *The Challenge of Change.* Little Rock, AR. LLA c/o Little Rock Convention Bureau, (501) 376-4781, Fax (501) 374-2255.

❖June 8-10, 1994. Center on Disabilities. (California State, Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers)*Virtual Reality and Persons with Disabilities Conference.* San Francisco, CA. Dr. Harry Murphy, (818) 885-2578 V/TDD, Fax: (818) 885-4929, or Vr@VAX.CSUN.EDU.

❖August 24-27, 1994. Adult Literacy & Technology Conference: *Technology: Taking Education into the 21st Century.* Atlanta, GA. Georgia Tech CE, (404) 894-2547.

❖September 25-28, 1994. Instructional Telecommunications Consortium: *Tele-learning Conference.* Baltimore, MD. Christine Dalziel, (202) 728-0200, ext. 219.❧

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